

TIP SHEET FOR RELATIVES AS PARENTS

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IS BEING ABUSED AT HOME. WHAT DO YOU DO?

Gather all the information you can about domestic violence.

Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence Statewide Hotline – 1-866-834-HELP

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 1800-787-3224(TTY)

Lending a sympathetic ear may be the best help you can offer.

Don't force the issue. Simply let her talk to you at her own pace. Always let her know when you understand her thoughts and feelings. "Never blame her for what's happening or underestimate her potential danger. Remember that your loved one or friend must make her own decisions about her life," advises the U.S. Department of Justice in *Helping Battered Women*. Don't think you'll be the person who will rescue her. Avoid getting frustrated because of her choices or because things are not moving as fast as you would like.

Tell her that no one deserves to be hurt.

Remember domestic violence is a crime. Phyl Rubenstein is a nationally recognized expert on domestic violence. She says that sometimes, we're afraid that a woman might be insulted if we tell her we think she is being abused. But, this can help a woman feel okay about seeking help.

Guide her to community services.

Privately share the information you have learned about abuse. Let her know she is not alone and people care about her. Encourage her to get help at the local domestic violence hotline or program. "If you are offering resources, you are opening a door," said Rubenstein.

Give her the emotional support she needs.

Battered women live with emotional as well as physical abuse. According to the U.S. Department of Justice: The abuser probably continually tells your friend that she is a bad woman, a bad wife, and a bad mother. Without positive words from other people, she may begin to believe she can't do anything right and that there really is something wrong with her. Help her see her strengths and skills. Tell her she deserves a life free from violence.

Be there for her when she needs you, and tell her you'll be there.

Provide whatever you can such as transportation, childcare, or financial assistance.

Help her develop a safety plan.

Help your friend or relative plan the steps to take if her partner becomes abusive again. Make a list of people she can call in an emergency. Suggest she carefully hide a suitcase of clothing, personal items, money, social security cards, bankbooks, and other important documents, so that it is ready to take with her if she is ready to leave.

If she decides to leave, contact the statewide hotline or local domestic violence program.

Battered women frequently face the most physical danger when attempting to flee. Be very careful about offering safety in your home. Talk to domestic violence project staff about the best way to handle this.

Copies of our tip sheets may be found on our web site at www.mainekids-kin.org

This tip sheet was adapted from the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence website, www.MCEDV.org